

*Outskirts of Estle City*  
*Selen*

Kordath yawned in the back of the speeder, head resting against the back of the seat. It had been a long day of going out and inspecting military installations. War was on the horizon, which seemed to be how things always were. He rubbed his eyes and sighed, glancing out the windows into the darkness, the island countryside passing by, the Citadel rising in the distance. Stres'trong'armis sat in the front, hands on the controls as he guided the speeder back home. Bleu heard a grunt of confusion from his bodyguard as the lights on the dash flickered, The Citadel began to slide out of center view as the speeder veered to the right, down an old road leading towards the shore.

"Uhh...Strong?"

**"It appears we have lost control of the speeder, Master. Be ready, this could be a trap."**

"Could be? Ya think?" grumbled the Shadow Lord, shifting in his seat to check the weight of the flashbangs on his belt. The speeder came to a gentle halt, settling on its air cushion to hover, the doors unlocking remotely. "Well that's....unsettlin'."

**"Please stay put, Master, I shall ascertain the situation,"** rumbled Strong, beginning to exit the vehicle. The world outside lit up, high beams on another speeder coming to life, pointed at Bleu's. A shapely form stepped in front of one of them and drew a sigh from the Ryn, who pushed open his own door and climbed out.

The Director of the DIA stood before her speeder, in the middle of the night, with a delicate saucer in one hand and a cup of tea in the other. She gave the towering Chiss a half smile and the Ryn a neutral gaze.

"Right, okay, what's happenin', Red?"

She wrinkled her nose in disdain, "I do not appreciate that moniker; not when I'm well aware of who else you refer to by it."

Kordath's tail twitched with an amusement he didn't allow to reach his face. That the Director and a certain former Consul didn't get along was one of the few things he could needle her with.

"It's late, we've been around half tha damned island tonight, luv, what's this about? Did It start?"

A figure stepped out of the darkness, the corona of the headlights having hidden him from view. While the Consul had sensed him, he didn't recognize the slender...Chiss. Of course it was another Chiss, he thought. Well dressed and attentive apparently, as he'd seen no sign of Lucine finishing her tea but the ghost-like man had appeared to take her cup all the same.

“Thank you Tabriss. Now, darlings,” spoke Lucine, turning to face the Shadow Lord and his guard. “*It* has not quite begun, though the pieces are in movement. There are questions about your suitability as a war leader, Kordath.”

He shifted his weight from one foot to another. It was never ‘lord’ or ‘my consul’ with this one. Usually, he was fine with this, but somehow with Lucine, it was...concerning, the lack of respect despite giving her a modicum of power as Director of the DIA.

“Well, that’s why we got a military command, innit? I’m not some damned fool who thinks he’s a military genius, just cause I can waggle me fingers and make stuff move about. Not some general, or admiral, or moff, yeah?”

She sighed and shook her head, “Perhaps, but you are no great administrator either. Yes, you’ve done much for the people of Estle City this past year, but what of Ol’val? What of Eldar? The rest of Selen? We have Collective insurgents crawling all over our homeworld, we have terrorists on Ol’val—”

“That’s your shop, luv, not mine,” growled Kordath, getting impatient. “Sorry, tired. Yeah, I ain’t perfect, never claimed ta be. And I’ll be out of yer hair after the next conflict resolves itself, yeah? Got yer good doctor mate all briefed and lined up already.”

Next to him, he noticed Strong stiffen at the mention of his Proconsul; there was little love lost there.

“So, the line of succession is clear, then?” he barely heard her murmur. She took a deep breath and gave the Consul a disarming smile, which only caused him to worry further. “My Dear, it seems time to execute The Plan.”

He furrowed his brow, sensing the energy pouring from her words but feeling no effect from them. Besides him he saw Strong’s stance shift, neck going straight and shoulders tightening.

“As clear as it can be fer now...” he stated cautiously, not liking where this was going. “Thought you and Rhy lance was uhhhh...close, ya know?”

“An obstacle,” she stated, her tone cold. “Useful in a way, but still in the way. Much as you are.”

He tensed, a glance at his bodyguard confirming his suspicions. Strong’s eyes were unfocused, and large hands were reaching towards the Consul. A motion from Lucine caught his eye, her hand waving and a cold smile on her face.

“*Stand still, Lord Consul,*” she spoke.

He'd known it was coming. He couldn't have not known. It didn't make it any less effective, even if he was able to shake it off fairly quick. It didn't matter. The hesitation in movement had been enough for a pair of large blue hands to close on his neck, lifting him kicking off the ground.

"S...str...STRONG," he gasped, fingernails digging into the man's thick forearms. His body twisted, like a fish out of water.

"I am sorry, darling, I'll let Zujenia know you fought off those Collective assassins valiantly. I'll even make certain dear little Shay'Ira is looked after," spoke Lucine, stepping up to Strong's side, a delicate hand reaching up to lay on his arm. "Finish it, my dear," she purred and leaned against him.

Bleu could see the muscles in his 'bodyguard's' arms tense up, and the world went black with a distant 'crunch' sound.